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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

JAN. AND FEB., 1848.

POPULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRESENT WAR.

OPINION rules the world. It gives rise, form and efficiency to every government on earth — to the autocracy of Russia, and the despotism of Turkey, as truly as to the limited monarchies of France and England, or the representative democracies of America. It is the common pedestal of their power. All human government must of necessity rest on public opinion; and, when that is once in full, determined array against it, no shield of authority, or arm of power, can long preserve it from change or ruin. Government may seem to lean for support upon an armed police, on prætorian guards, on mercenary bayonets or scimitars; but, after all, it is only the opinion prevalent in society, that controls these very instruments of power. It is such opinion that shapes and enforces law in our Slave as really as in our Free states, in Russia as in England; and the chief difference is, that in the former cases the subject millions have hardly any influence over the public opinion which rules every thing.

In our own country, public opinion is the grand regulator of government. The real sovereignty here resides in the people; and their voice, once distinctly uttered, *must* be heeded by our rulers. It may for a time be doubtful what the popular will is; but, when settled and known, men in power must conform to its demands, or soon resign their places to others who will. If any policy contradicts public opinion, that policy must and will be changed so as to meet the wishes of the people. Here is the great law of democracy, the mainspring of our whole government, the origin and the cure of its worst evils. Our rulers, from the very necessity of their position, will go either for peace or for war, just as they see the people go, or suppose they will go; and, when their voice shall unequivocally demand a pause or an end to the

work of blood, the sword must of course give way to other methods, more rational and christian, for the adjustment of our difficulties with other nations.

Here we find both our responsibility and our encouragement in the present crisis of our country. We have been engaged nearly two years in a war which every patriot, every friend of God or man, must deeply deplore ; but the question of its continuance or its close depends on the known or supposed wishes of the people. If they clamor for its continuance, no earthly power can arrest it ; but, if they insist on its speedy close at all hazards, it will of course come very soon to an end by some means. The way to such a result is as plain as the sun at noon ; *if we stop fighting Mexico, the war must of necessity cease.* This our rulers certainly can easily do, if they choose ; and they *will* thus choose, if the people as a body would just lift their voice for it in earnest, and show that they are determined to have it. Let it be distinctly understood all over the land, that the mass of our people will no longer lend the support of their votes to any set of men who advocate the continuance of this war ; and the government would at once turn back from its career of blood, and restore peace to these republics in a month.

Here is the pivot of our responsibilities on this subject. Every thing among us turns on popular opinion ; and that opinion, it is in the power of good men, if they will, to cast in the mould of peace. True, they cannot do this in a day ; but since the origin of our cause, they have had most ample time and facilities for doing it, and they are guilty before God for not having done it long ago. Had they done their whole duty on this subject in season, they might have formed, all over the land, such a public opinion as would have averted the long and fearful train of evils that have at length overtaken us. How certainly, how easily might this have been done ; but the nation, even the churches of Christ, slumbered year after year, under our loudest warnings, our most importunate entreaties that they would wake to the claims of peace, and use the means requisite under God to overspread the land with such pacific sentiments as would prevent catastrophes like that which has now come upon us.

This neglect imposes a fearful responsibility for the origin and the results of our present war. When God makes inquisition for blood, he will hold somebody amenable to his bar for every drop shed in this reckless, ruthless crusade against Mexico. And whom will he thus hold amenable ? Our rulers alone ? True, theirs will be a terrible account — an account *we* would not meet for all the blood-stained honors war has ever heaped upon its Cæsars and Napoleons, for the

sceptre of a thousand worlds like our own ; but our people must share this responsibility to some extent with our rulers.

Had not the sentiments and habits of the people generally been so wrong on the subject of peace as to give promise of their favoring the war, our rulers would never have plunged into it ; and hence the former, have with the latter, a fearful share of its guilty responsibilities. We do, indeed, regard it, not as the choice of the people, but as the game of politicians, and fully believe, if the latter had not sprung it upon us unawares, the former would never have allowed it to come ; yet did the war-spirit of the West and South-west invite the war, and the popular voice, in many parts of the country, has from the first wildly cheered it on, and talked flatteringly of laurels won in a war of injustice, rapacity and vengeance !

We may well thank God for such a turn of the tide as we have recently witnessed. The people had begun to tire and sicken of the war ; and, in response to the growing demand among the best of them for its speedy termination, some of our leading statesmen have at length raised their voice in favor of arresting this work of death. It is now the main question before the country ; and Congress, just assembled, meets it on the threshold, and must settle it in some way.

How shall it be settled ? It is for the people to say through their representatives ; and, if from Maine to Texas, from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains, they would with one voice demand peace on terms of justice to both parties, the sword would be sheathed at once, and the difficulties between us and Mexico be adjusted by the fair and equitable means of negotiation or reference.

Now, cannot every person in the land contribute something to form and enforce such a demand for peace ? Yes ; and, if the 1500 presses in our country, its 40,000 pulpits, and its three or four millions of professed Christians, would just unite in giving prompt and full utterance to this demand all over the country, our rulers would soon heed their wishes, and restore peace to these warring republics. We rejoice in the stand which so many have already taken ; and fain would we press upon the conscience of all, before God, the solemn question, whether they can, as ministers or Christians, as patriots or as men, any longer refuse their hearty, most zealous aid in this work of peace ? Canst thou, ambassador from the God of peace, or thou, disciple of the Prince of peace, or thou, lover of thy country whose very life-blood flows from the fountain of peace, or thou, friend of thy race cursed from time immemorial with the evils of war ; *canst* thou hold back thy hand from such a labor of humanity and love ? Would to God, O ruler of a free, Christian people, we could pour into thine ear

the voices of anguish and agony, of mourning and lamentation, which come up from so many battle-fields, from so many desolate cities, so many bereaved, broken, bleeding hearts in both republics, pleading with thee to sheath the sword of thy warriors, and put an end forever to this fiendish work of carnage and devastation.

“WE GAVE THE MEXICANS HELL.”

SUCH was the language of an American officer who was most awfully mangled in one of the earliest engagements between our forces and the Mexican. Says an eye witness, “The whole of his lower jaw, and a part of his tongue and palate, is shot away by a grape shot. He, however, survives, though incapable of speech. He communicates his thoughts by writing on a slate, and receives the necessary nutriment for the support of life with much difficulty. He converses with cheerfulness and *exultation* upon the success of our army, and concluded an answer to some queries concerning the battle of the 9th by writing, “We gave the Mexicans hell!”

Not to dwell upon the hardening influence of war that would prompt the utterance of such a sentiment by a dying man, how full of intense, and undeniable, and horrible truth is this declaration! Yes, we gave, and we are giving, the Mexicans hell. At Matamoras, at Monterey, Buena Vista, Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, and near the capitol, the Mexicans witnessed and felt the nearest approximation to hell that earth can furnish. The battle-field with its carnage, its agony, its death-shrieks, its systematic, scientific butchery, the wild and furious raging of passion, the fiendish exultation in the torments and convulsive struggles and slaughter of thousands, is the nearest resemblance to hell that even the depravity and cruelty of man can devise. What more vivid impression of hell could the inhabitants of Vera Cruz receive than was furnished by the bombardment of their city,—the broken walls—the shattered dwellings—the blood stained streets—the showers of cannon shot and shells freighted with death—the torn and mangled forms of innocent women and helpless infants—the sudden death-groans of entire families instantly sent into eternity, and the indescribable agony of those who momentarily expected to be the victims of the fire and war-storm that was raging around and above them.

And who are they who are giving the Mexicans hell? Are they barbarians who glory in cruelty and slaughter, and whose thirst for